

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 4, 2015

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September 30: [Special Ed](#) evaluations due

Notes from Commissioner Wagner

1. College Board releases SAT, AP results

Yesterday, the College Board released SAT and AP results, and we issued a news release about the results among students in public high schools in Rhode Island. Overall, our students improved their participation in and success on AP exams. On the SAT exam, 59 percent of the Rhode

Island public-school students in the Class of 2015 participated. The participation rate has improved by 5 percentage points over the past 5 years.

Participation on the SAT exam among Black students in the senior class rose by 7 percentage points this year, up to 62 percent. The participation rate among Black students has risen by 11 percentage points over the past five years. Among Hispanic students, participation declined by 1 percentage point, to 52 percent, but the five-year participation rate has increased by 8 percentage points.

Ten Rhode Island high schools had participation rates of 75 percent or better.

The SAT scores for Rhode Island public-school students in the Class of 2015 were 480 in reading (9 points below the national average), 481 in mathematics (17 points below the national average), and 468 in writing (3 points below the national average). Rhode Island scores declined by 3 points in each test, almost exactly matching the national trend, which was a decline of 2 points in reading and a decline of 3 points in both mathematics and writing.

Among our students in public high schools, 4,675 students took an AP exam during the 2014-15 school year, an increase of 7 percentage points from the previous year.

These students took 7,820 exams, an increase of 8 percentage points from the previous year. Of these exams, 4,413 received a score of 3 or higher (on a 5-point scale), an increase of 6 percentage points from the previous year. All of these increases exceed the national rates of improvement among public-school students.

AP participation in Rhode Island is virtually statewide, with students in every school district but one participating in AP exams. Aside from the state-operated schools and several charter public schools, students in every Rhode Island public high school took AP exams during the previous school year.

Our system of public education is a ladder that can lead students to success, and exams such as the SAT and the ACT are steps that inspire students to think about college and that can lead to college entry. The results released today confirm that Rhode Island students recognize the importance of preparing for college – through their courses of study and through participation for college-readiness exams such as the SAT and AP. We need to continue working with teachers, students, and their families to ensure that students in every high school have the knowledge and skills they need to continue with their education beyond high school.

2. High schools to be notified of 54th Annual U.S. Senate Youth Program opportunity

Later today or early next week, we will send this message to your high-school principals and school counselors:

Welcome back as we begin another exciting and challenging school year. I would like to let you know about an important scholarship opportunity for your students.

Juniors and seniors from your high school are eligible to participate in the 54th Annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), *provided that they are currently serving, for the entire 2015-16 academic year*, in an elected or appointed capacity in any one of the following student government, civic, or educational organizations:

- Student-body president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer;
- Class president, vice president, secretary, or treasurer;
- Student Council representative; or
- Student representative elected or appointed (appointed by panel, commission or board) to a district, regional, or state-level civic or

educational organization approved by the state selection administrator.

All fifty states offer this program, and Rhode Island has participated for many years. Each state selects two students to represent their state for a week of special activities in Washington, D.C., where the students interact with elected officials and with people in top government positions. Each selected student will also be awarded a five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) scholarship. The students we have selected to represent Rhode Island have consistently reported that they enjoyed a unique and valuable educational experience.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will use a three-phase screening process, including a test, an essay, and an interview, to select the two student delegates and two alternates. Each school that wishes to participate must name a USSYP coordinator who will be responsible for administering the test and the essay portion of this process at their high school.

With the United States Senate Youth Program season coming up, it would be great to integrate some of the aspects of the United States Senate Youth Program into your curriculum. We hope that if you incorporate this opportunity into your curriculum, more students may be motivated to apply for this program.

RIDE will need to know, by **September 18**, the name and contact information of the coordinator for each high school, how that person can be reached. An *e-mail address for the program coordinator is mandatory*. Please e-mail that information to Colleen Brophy, the USSYP manager at RIDE, at Colleen.brophy@ride.ri.gov. Please be sure to include in that e-mail the name of the school for each coordinator.

I have enclosed a school participation form, a student participation form, and further information about the program. Please submit one school participation form per school. One student participation form will be used as a cover sheet for each student's test; all forms must be forwarded to Colleen Brophy by October 9, 2015.

If you have any questions about this program, please contact Colleen Brophy at (401) 222-4275 or Colleen.brophy@ride.ri.gov. For more information or to download materials please go to <http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner> or <http://hearstfdn.org/ussyp>. This program can greatly benefit your students, and I hope that you will encourage them to apply. I wish you all the best for the 2015-16 school year!

From RIDE

Early Learning:

3. Applications being accepted through September 18 for planning, construction, renovation of early-learning schools, centers

Public schools and child-care centers can apply for planning grants for up to \$20,000. Planning grants can be used to pay professionals such as architects, engineers, landscape architects, and playground professionals. These grants are intended to help organizations accomplish the following:

- determine the costs of a proposed project;
- determine the feasibility of a proposed project;
- develop a design plan to prioritize needed facility improvements; and
- develop a plan to address health and safety issues indoors or on playgrounds.

Public schools and child-care centers can also apply for capital grants for up to \$50,000. These grants can be used for actual construction or renovation work in qualified child-care facilities. Priority uses for these funds include addressing DCYF child-care licensing issues or challenges in meeting facility and playground standards outlined in the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards, major health and safety concerns, and barriers

to moving up the quality ladder. Priority will be given to organizations serving high-needs children that can demonstrate organizational capacity and an ability to complete the proposed project in a timely manner, provide matching funding, and manage a construction project that includes Davis Bacon compliance. For those organizations applying for a capital grant, the following will be required as part of the application:

- a design plan for the proposed project, developed by a licensed professional; and
- a cost estimate for the proposed scope of work.

Please note that any organization requesting capital funding to address a playground-safety issue must submit an audit or inspection report from a certified Playground Safety Inspector as part of its application process. Planning-grant funds may be used to pay for an audit and improvement plan.

In order to be eligible for either planning or capital grants, organizations must be actively participating in BrightStars and be rated on 2013 standards. In addition, centers and public schools must be registered and have updated profiles in the Early Childhood Education Data System. Please note that capital and planning grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis; expenses must be paid by the grantee and then reimbursed by LISC.

The deadline for proposals is **September 18**. Learn more and apply at:

<https://riccelff.org/grants/facilities-improvement-grant2/>

Data Reporting and Collection:

4. For Electronic Direct Certification, RIDE to match enrollment data with data from Human Services on Tuesday (September 8)

The Electronic Direct Certification (eDC) process benefits households and schools by ensuring that eligible children will automatically receive free meals at school without the paperwork burden and by decreasing the number of eligible students who go unreported, especially in the middle and high schools.

On **Tuesday** (September 8), we will be pulling data for the eDC match with the Department of Human Services. The next data pull for the eDC will be next month, in case you miss this deadline.

If you have any questions about the enrollment-data submission, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

5. Pearson announces changes in testing technology for PARCC

Pearson has started to publish technical documentation for the next iteration of the PARCC assessment. Please review the latest [technology bulletins](#) to become familiar with technical changes since last year. For more detailed information regarding the technology, the [Pearson technology setup page](#) has information for each aspect of the testing technology.

There are two major changes that may impact districts, the first being that the Google Chrome Web browser will not be supported for PARCC testing. Chromebooks are unaffected by this; however, the second major change is that Pearson has released a [PARCC TestNav desktop application](#) that can be used on all devices, including those running the Chrome browser. This application also eliminates the dependency on Java and allows for a more secure testing environment. This application also allows you to migrate from the Chrome browser to the desktop application for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

6. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to submit 2015-16 TCS data as soon as possible

Please submit your 2015-16 Teacher, Course, Student (TCS) data as soon as possible. The TCS collection is a daily collection; therefore, we continually update the data and

the data do not need to be perfect or complete on the initial upload. The TCS data are important as these data form the foundation for many data verifications and technology systems, including the Instructional Support System.

If you have any questions about the TCS data, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

7. *Reminder:* Several data collections are open or due by the end of the month

The following are some data-collection deadlines for August:

- [Graduate and Dropout Reporting via Enrollment Census](#) - Open
- [Monthly Reimbursements for Nutrition Programs](#) – Open
- [Summer Exits Through Enrollment Census](#) – Open
- Due September 30: [Personnel Data Collection \(PDC\)](#)
- Due September 30: [Special Ed Evaluations](#)

Information about upcoming data collections can be found on the [data collection calendar](#). Weekly collection [webinars](#) provide details regarding upcoming collections, along with a question-and-answer period.

8. *Reminder:* LEAs asked to keep School Profile data up to date

The School Profile module within eRIDE is used to collect detailed information on districts and schools. It is important that this information is kept up to date throughout the year, as the Master Directory and other systems are reliant on this data. If you have any questions about the School Profile data, please submit a helpdesk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

9. *Reminder:* Renaissance data-sharing agreement must be renewed at start of new school year

Your data-extraction information is valid only for one year. Each year, the information you have extracted will be cleared on July 31. At the beginning of each school year (any time after August 1), you will need to accept the data-sharing agreement again and make your current data-sharing selections.

We have discovered a glitch with the Renaissance data transfer process, and we believe that the data managers have remediated the issue. If you have signed the data-sharing agreement and do not see your data in the Instructional Support System within a week, please submit a help desk ticket, at:

<https://support.ride.ri.gov>.

Educator Quality:

10. Conference for teacher assistants scheduled for October 3

RIDE is sponsoring a conference for teacher assistants, with support from the Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project. The day-long conference for teacher assistants will be held on Saturday, **October 3**, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Lincoln Middle School, 152 Jenckes Hill Road. Space is limited, and pre-registration and pre-payment (or purchase order) is necessary. The conference sessions will provide teacher assistants with practical information and strategies that may be implemented within the classroom to support student achievement and success.

For more information and for registration, please see the scrolling banner at:

www.ritap.org .

If you have any questions regarding the conference, contact Alice Woods, at alice.woods@ride.ri.gov or 222-8983.

From the U.S. Department of Education

11. Resources available for educational programs on Constitution/Citizenship Day

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

September 17 is [Constitution Day/Citizenship Day](#), commemorating the September 17, 1787, signing of the U.S. Constitution. In recognition, Congress has mandated that every educational institution receiving federal funding hold an educational program about this seminal document. To assist students and educators in their studies, the [National Archives and Records Administration](#) offers a couple of key tools: “[The Constitution at Work](#),” a match game connecting primary resources to constitutional articles, and “[Exploring the U.S. Constitution](#),” an eBook that explores the roots of the three branches of government. See online resources are also available from the [Library of Congress](#), the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#), and the [U.S. Senate](#).

12. Education Secretary Duncan, Labor Secretary Perez discuss K-14 school model

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

In a [joint op-ed](#) for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Secretary Duncan and Labor Secretary Thomas Perez extol the virtue of a K-14 school model. “To prepare all students for the 21st century workforce, we must do a better job of teaching job-ready skills and equipping the next generation to thrive in the global economy,” they explained. “With technical education, experience in the workplace, and mentors in their chosen field, our young people gain a solid career footing and a chance to punch their ticket to the middle class. They have no doubt that what they’re learning is relevant to the workplace and that those skills will help them succeed in the real world.”

13. Passes available to 4th graders to visit federal lands, waters

Please see this message from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach:

Beginning this week, under the President’s [Every Kid in a Park initiative](#), fourth-grade students nationwide may visit a [web site](#) to obtain a pass for free access to all federal lands and waters. The pass is valid for the 2015-16 school year and grants entry for the student and three accompanying adults – or an entire car for

drive-in parks – at more than 2,000 national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and marine sanctuaries. The website also offers educators and parents activities, trip planning books, safety and packing tips, and other helpful information.

From other organizations

14. American Red Cross instructor training available for teachers, school nurses

Please see this notice from the American Red Cross:

American Red Cross instructor training is available for teachers and school nurses for the current school year. The free (due to the limited amount of funding available for the trainings, registration is on a first-come, first-served basis) training is available for teachers and school nurse teachers to become certified for two years as a First Aid & CPR/AED Instructor and authorized to teach all components of the First Aid/CPR/AED Program, including optional first-aid modules: Asthma Inhaler, Anaphylaxis and Epinephrine Auto-Injectors, and Using a Tourniquet lessons.

Participants must:

- be a Rhode Island teacher or school nurse;

- possess current American Red Cross First Aid or CPR- AED certification(s) or the equivalent (your certifications will be verified during your first classroom session); and
- complete the online pre-course at least 2 days prior to the first classroom session.

For additional information and to schedule a 12-hour training (minimum 4 participants) for your LEA, contact:

Joseph Lodge

Corporate Solutions Account Executive/American Red Cross Preparedness, Health & Safety Services Connecticut & Rhode Island

Cell: (860)-335-7502

E-mail: Joseph.Lodge@redcross.org

Note: If you are currently an instructor for another First Aid/CPR/AED program (American Heart Association, American Safety & Health Institute, etc.), free crossover training allowing you to teach American Red Cross programs in addition to your current instructor authorization is available.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InsideRIDE/FieldMemos.aspx>